

CLAIMS

1. A method of billing for access to individual content items on a page downloadable from a server to a user client entity, in which at least one content item on the page is user-selectable for download; the item, following its selection, being downloaded incorporated, or for incorporation, into the associated page and otherwise being absent from the downloaded page; the server generating an item-dependent billing event at the time of at least the first downloading of the item.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein when first requested by a client entity, the page is downloaded without said at least one content items, the downloaded page including an interface component enabling the user to select a said at least one content item for access, use of this component to select a content item causing the server to download the selected content item either by:
- downloading the page again with the content item incorporated, or
 - downloading the content item in a plug-in for incorporation by the client entity into the previously downloaded page at a location identified in the latter.
3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the originally-downloaded page includes a respective place holder for the or each said at least one content item, the place holder including an item descriptor and an access price indication.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the user has pre-selected specific content items and/or content items of a particular type, this pre-selection being stored for access by the server, the server using this pre-selection to determine whether a selectable content item is to be incorporated into a page requested for downloading.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the pre-selection is one made during the course of a current user session with the server, the pre-selection being stored in a server session variable for the user.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein a billing event is only generated the first time the item is downloaded during a user session with the server.

7. A method according to claim 4, wherein the pre-selection is stored in a database with persistence beyond a current user session with the server.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein a record is maintained of whether a user has previously downloaded a said content item and wherein this record is checked so that the user is only billed once for each item independently of the number of downloads of the item, this checking either being done:

- prior to generation of said billing event with the event not being generated if the item has been previously downloaded, or
- subsequent to the generation of the billing event with the event being cancelled if the item has been previously downloaded.

9. A method according claim 1, wherein the page is a web page and the server is an HTTP web server.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein the page is a WAP deck.

11. A server system arranged to bill for access to an individual content item on a page downloadable from the server system to a user client entity, the server system comprising:

- a content server for serving a user-requested page in which a content item on the page is user-selectable for download;
- selection detection means for determining selection by the user of the user-selectable item of the user- requested page; and
- control means responsive to the selection detection means detecting selection of said user-selectable item, to cause that item to be downloaded by the content server incorporated, or for incorporation, into the associated page;
- billing means for generating an item-dependent billing event at the time of at least the first downloading of the user-selectable content item.

12. A system according to claim 11, wherein when said page is first requested, the content server is operative to download the page without the user-selectable content item, the downloaded page including an interface component enabling the user to select user-selectable content item for access, use of this component to select a content item causing
5 an indication to be sent to the server system which is detected by the selection detection means resulting in the control means causing the content server to download the content item either by:

- downloading the page again with the content item incorporated, or
- downloading the content item in a plug-in for incorporation into the previously
10 downloaded page at a location identified in the latter.

13. A system according to claim 11, wherein the user has pre-selected specific content items and/or content items of a particular type, the server system include selection store for storing this pre-selection, and the selection detection means using this pre-selection to
15 determine whether the user-selectable content item is to be incorporated into the user-requested page.

14. A system according to claim 11, wherein the page is a web page and the content server is an HTTP web server.